



February 9, 2004

Guatemalan admits delivering two kilograms of heroin to RI

Miguel David Garcia-Morales, of Guatemala, has admitted transporting two kilograms of heroin to Rhode Island in October. DEA agents arrested Garcia-Morales outside a restaurant near I-95 in Warwick after finding two kilograms of heroin in a secret compartment of a van.

The Office of the United States Attorney announced the guilty plea, which Garcia- Morales entered on February 6 before Chief U.S. District Court Judge Ernest C. Torres in U.S. District Court, Providence. Pending sentencing, Garcia-Morales, 33, is detained at the Wyatt Federal Detention Center, Central Falls.

At the plea hearing on February 6, Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard W. Rose said that, had the case gone to trial, the government would have proven that the Drug Enforcement Administration developed information in October that a quantity of heroin was being transported from New York to Rhode Island in a Safari van. On October 14, agents observed a van matching the description they were given arrive in a parking lot off Jefferson Boulevard in Warwick and saw two occupants enter a restaurant.

After two drug-trained dogs detected the presence of drugs in the van, agents went into the restaurant and obtained permission from the driver of the van to search it. Inside a secret compartment beneath one of the rear passenger seats, agents found a brown envelope containing two kilograms of heroin. Agents arrested the driver, identified as Garcia-Morales, who conceded

that he was transporting the heroin but said the passenger of the van had no knowledge of the drugs.

Garcia-Morales pleaded guilty to possessing with intent to distribute heroin. The offense, as charged, carries a statutory minimum penalty of ten years in federal prison and a statutory maximum of life imprisonment plus a \$4,000,000 fine. Federal sentencing is determined on the basis of guidelines that are based on such factors as the specific nature of an offense and a defendant's criminal background, if any.

The **Drug Enforcement Administration** investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Rose is prosecuting it.

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Contact: 401-528-5224

E-mail: thomas.connell@usdoj.gov